

a distance. It was a strange thing, but he was more bashful with the girl he loved than with the general run of gay ladies.

Nannie had given him a good many bright glances. These he took for encouragement and lived on them. In his reticent, awkward way he fancied that Nannie must see that he adored her, and everybody else.

When Lucius reached the Wilson home that evening all in a bewildering flutter he found Bertha in the garden. She invited him to a rustic seat, kind and pleasant with him as she was always.

"I'd like to ask a question, Miss Wilson," spoke Lucius abruptly.

"Certainly, Mr. Borden," she replied.

"You are so kind and good to me. I've got a ring here," and Lucius brought to light the little case. "It's an engagement ring that I may want to use later in the evening. Will you just tell me what finger of the lady I put it on?"

"Why, this one," explained Bertha, rather seriously too, and she held out her hand and Lucius slipped the circuit in place, took it off again and said gleefully:

"Did I do it right?"

"Oh, perfectly," assured Bertha, and she looked a trifle troubled.

"Then—could I see your mother, Mrs. Wilson, for a few minutes?"

"Just go into the parlor, Mr. Borden directed, 'Bertha,' and I will find her."

"I've come—you see, well, I want to ask you for the hand of your daughter, Mrs. Wilson," blurted out Lucius, as the matron entered the room.

He was red as a peony and trembling all over. He felt like running away. Having said so much, he was dumb.

"Mr. Borden," spoke the lady, very kindly, but he fancied very gravely, "I have anticipated this, for Bertha just gave me an inkling of how matters stood. I am very sorry, but my

daughter has been secretly engaged to a young man, now abroad, for over a year."

"Oh, my!" gasped poor Lucius, wishing the floor would open and swallow him up.

"We are your friends, your true friends," went on the kind-hearted lady, placing a sympathizing hand on the arm of Lucius. "It is our wish and desire that you continue to visit us. We value your company and we will always be your friends."

How Lucius got out of the house he did not know. He saw his fabric of loving dreams and ardent hopes all in ruins. Just crossing the garden he came upon Nannie.

He advanced towards her. She deliberately turned her back upon him, she actually made a face at him, and sailed away, her head lifted contemptuously in air. Heavens! was this the boastful friendship of the Wilson family?

Lucius was crushed. He stole home wretched. After that when he passed Nannie on the street she turned her head away. He evaded Bertha. Lucius grew thin and pale. He wore the ring next to his heart, wishing to die and hoping they would bury it along with him.

It was at a town picnic that he next came directly in contact with any of the family. His aunt, really alarmed at his state of health, had induced him to take a little change and recreation. He groaned at the word. Lucius stole away from crowds to a secluded spot. He was staring dolefully at the river when a light form flashed before him.

"I have found you. I am glad," spoke Bertha Wilson. "Mr. Borden, do you realize how mother and I are worrying about you? This is all wrong. We think everything of you and—"

"Don't speak of it. I know it," said Lucius in a distressful tone. "That don't mend it, though. Here, keep that as a memento and forget a poor,